Three police forces allow gender-fluid officers multiple warrant cards

Tash Mosheim

Leicestershire, Norfolk and Suffolk police confirm they had issued more than one identity card to officers to reflect their gender on a given day

Warrant cards are official identification documents carried by officers
BRIAN A JACKSON/GETTY IMAGES

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Police officers who identify as gender-fluid have been issued with both male and female warrant cards, allowing them to use different identification.

Leicestershire, Norfolk and Suffolk police confirmed that they had issued more than one identity card to officers to reflect different genders, according to freedom of information responses obtained by The Telegraph.

Warrant cards are official identification documents carried by officers. Police carrying out a stop and search must show their warrant card if they are not in uniform.

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The practice has prompted criticism because thorough police searches involving the exposure of intimate body parts should be carried out by an officer of the same biological sex as the person being searched.

Following last year's Supreme Court ruling on the meaning of sex under the Equality Act, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) guidance states that such searches should be carried out on the basis of biological sex. Limited exceptions can be made if a detainee requests an officer of a different sex, but written consent is required.

Chris Philp, the shadow home secretary, said: "Police forces should not be allowing officers to jump from one gender to the next whenever they feel like it. This risks undermining public trust in policing.

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"When it comes to things like conducting strip searches of suspects, the gender of the officer is relevant, as some suspects only want to be strip-searched by someone of the same biological sex.

"The police should concentrate on the basics of policing, which is protecting the public and catching more criminals."

Norfolk and Suffolk constabularies, which share HR and support services, have a trans equality at work policy stating that they can "issue dual or multiple cards for those who are transitioning or are gender-fluid if this is specifically requested".

Officers who fully transition must surrender the additional cards and be issued a single one.

The policy follows 2018 guidance produced by Stonewall in partnership with the NPCC, which said that "individuals who identify as gender-fluid may require two cards to reflect their gender on different days". That guidance has since been removed from the NPCC website and it said that it had no current guidance on multiple warrant cards.

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Not all forces permit the practice. South Yorkshire police said it would not issue multiple cards for "security reasons".

Leicestershire police said: "Multiple ID cards are issued in certain limited circumstances, and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. This is in line with force equality guidance. Any request will be done with the consideration of security risks and public confidence."

A spokesman for Norfolk Constabulary said: "Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies are reviewing relevant policies following recent court judgments and we are awaiting further direction from the National Police Chiefs'

Council."

None of the forces confirmed whether officers were currently carrying multiple warrant cards.